

I am writing to express my opposition to the Notice of Proposed Rule Making, 05-235 regarding the Amateur Radio Service. I am specifically opposed to the elimination of the Morse code examination element, Element 1, for new radio amateurs in the Amateur Radio Service. I received my amateur radio license in 1978 at age 15, and the Morse code examination was not a hindrance then, nor should it be now. Communication by Morse code is by far the most efficient mode of transmission under emergency situations (small battery powered radios, no computer access, in-the-field conditions, etc...), and without testing for it the reality is that new radio amateurs will simply not learn it. That goes contrary to one of the missions of amateur radio, to provide communications *when all else fails*. I was opposed to the decrease in the Morse code speed of 13 wpm to 5 wpm for access to high frequency (HF) operating privileges for General class licensees as well as removing the 20 wpm "hurdle" for Amateur Extra. Extra class licensees were at one time the "cream-of-the-crop" of experienced operators. Now anyone who can memorize a few questions can obtain this elite status. This is not a recipe to maintaining a well-trained cadre of amateur communications specialists.

As an additional factor, and perhaps this is more a sentimental one than a practical one, hundreds of thousands of amateur radio operators have passed the minimum required Morse code examination over the years, and as such we possess a common bond. We are a fraternity, and when this bond (perhaps our strongest bond) is broken something is lost from the fraternity. It is this aspect that I may miss most if the proposed changes become a reality. I frankly think that those who complain about the Morse code requirement as being a "burden" are simply lazy; my eight year old daughter learned the Morse code in a matter of days. This certainly does nothing to strengthen our bond in a time when preparation for a Homeland emergency, which would rely on amateur radio volunteers, will require cooperation from the entire Amateur Radio Service community. This rule change will do nothing to increase the number of qualified and dedicated amateur radio operators in the Service. It might increase the numbers of warm bodies in the short term, but in the end those who are not interested will not stay in the Service, no matter if there is a Morse code requirement or not. The bottom line is that there is no good reason to remove the requirement, and for this reason I oppose the elimination of the Morse code requirement for obtaining an amateur radio license.

Sincerely,

Paul Roche  
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